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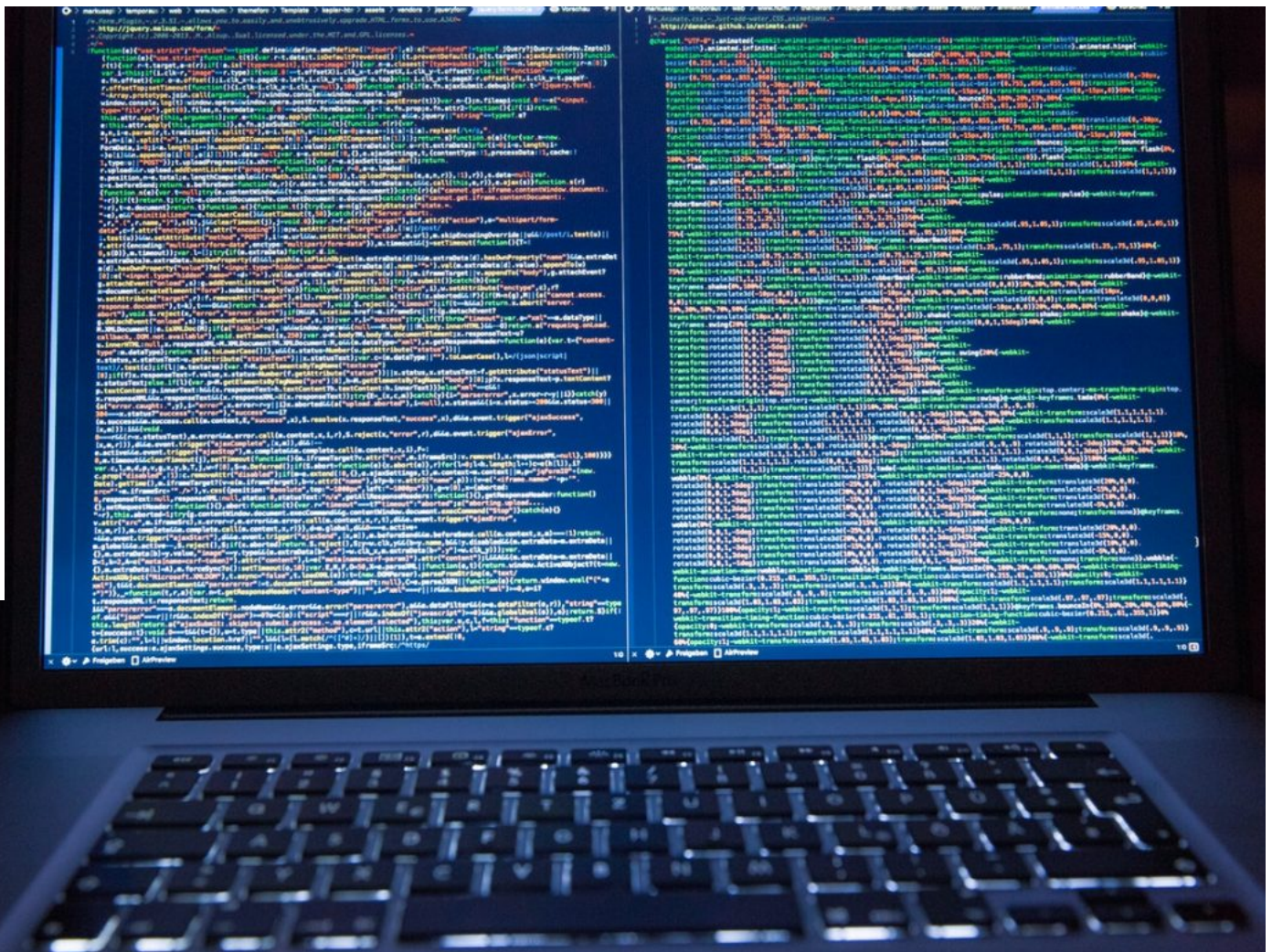
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Browser Cryptocurrency Mining: The End of Website Ads?

written by **Nadja Bester**   October 17, 2017

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Visiting a website? Be sure to check your CPU usage. You might be part of a clandestine browser cryptocurrency mining operation without your knowledge.

The Pirate Bay

This is what users of torrent site The Pirate Bay (TPB) discovered recently. In a move to eradicate reliance on ad income revenue, in September the website took to installing a Javascript cryptocurrency miner designed t company some **Monero** coins. The script allocates central processing units to the mining of cryptocurrency.

TPB – a Bitcoin user since the cryptocurrency's earliest days and a crypto pioneer in the torrent business – implemented said tool for the monetization abilities it offers.

According to crypto miner tool Coinhive, owner of the script tool used by TPA, participating businesses can bene from their services through eliminating ads and generating on-site monetization.

During this TPB test period, The Monero javascript miner was not implemented site-wide, and implemented serv

a test to ascertain the viability − and the income potential, naturally − of replacing site ads. With a lot of th ^ ≥'

advertisers specializing in pornography, this is seen as a positive move by some users. The company **explained**

> " *"As you may have noticed we are testing a Monero javascript miner. This is only a test. We really wan*
>
> *get rid of all the ads. But we also need enough money to keep the site running."*

On Reddit, comments were generally positive, although there was a call for greater upfront transparency.

[−] **DimitriT** 5 points 29 days ago

My biggest issue is not that they are mining some bitcoins without telling me. It's just to intrusive and using to much resources. If they were upfront about it and added couple of options, ON/OFF 90% 50% 20% then I would probably choose to continue mining on 50% or 20%. Add a cookies.

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[−] **Graxwell** 1 point 22 days ago

I'd 100% be fine with this if they actually tell us about it.

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[−] **login_for_no_atheism** 10 points 29 days ago

I don't really mind spending extra CPU if it helps tpb

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[−] **unguardedsnow** 8 points 26 days ago

Don't know if anyone else saw this, but on the bottom of the page was a little widget that let me start and stop miner and set a number of threads allowed.

Seems neat to me, and much better than ads

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[−] **iraber** 18 points 28 days ago

I actually applaud the move. I mean they should've introduced it in a more transparent manner and all, but think about it:

1) The TPB costs some money to operate 2) The site only generates revenue through donations and ads 3) Not a lot of people are inclined to donate 4) Ads are invasive and flat out annoying

So, the logic goes like this: what thing could help users contribute financially to the site without shelling out money or being forced to view stupid ads?
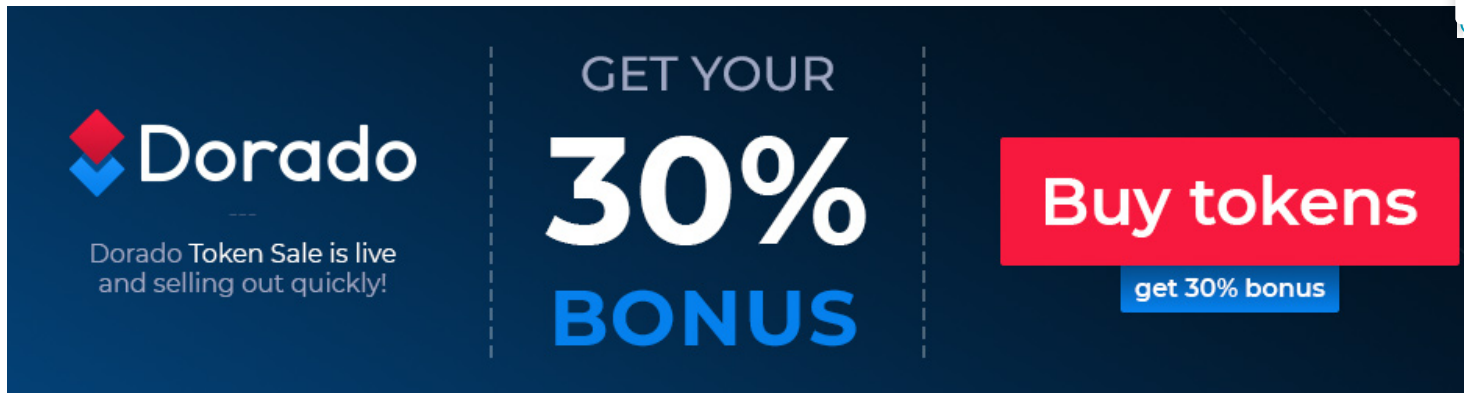
The coin mining script is about the best answer to the question.

I'm damn happy to help.

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Now, TPB has once again taken to employing a Monero script – this time seemingly without providing users with option to opt out.
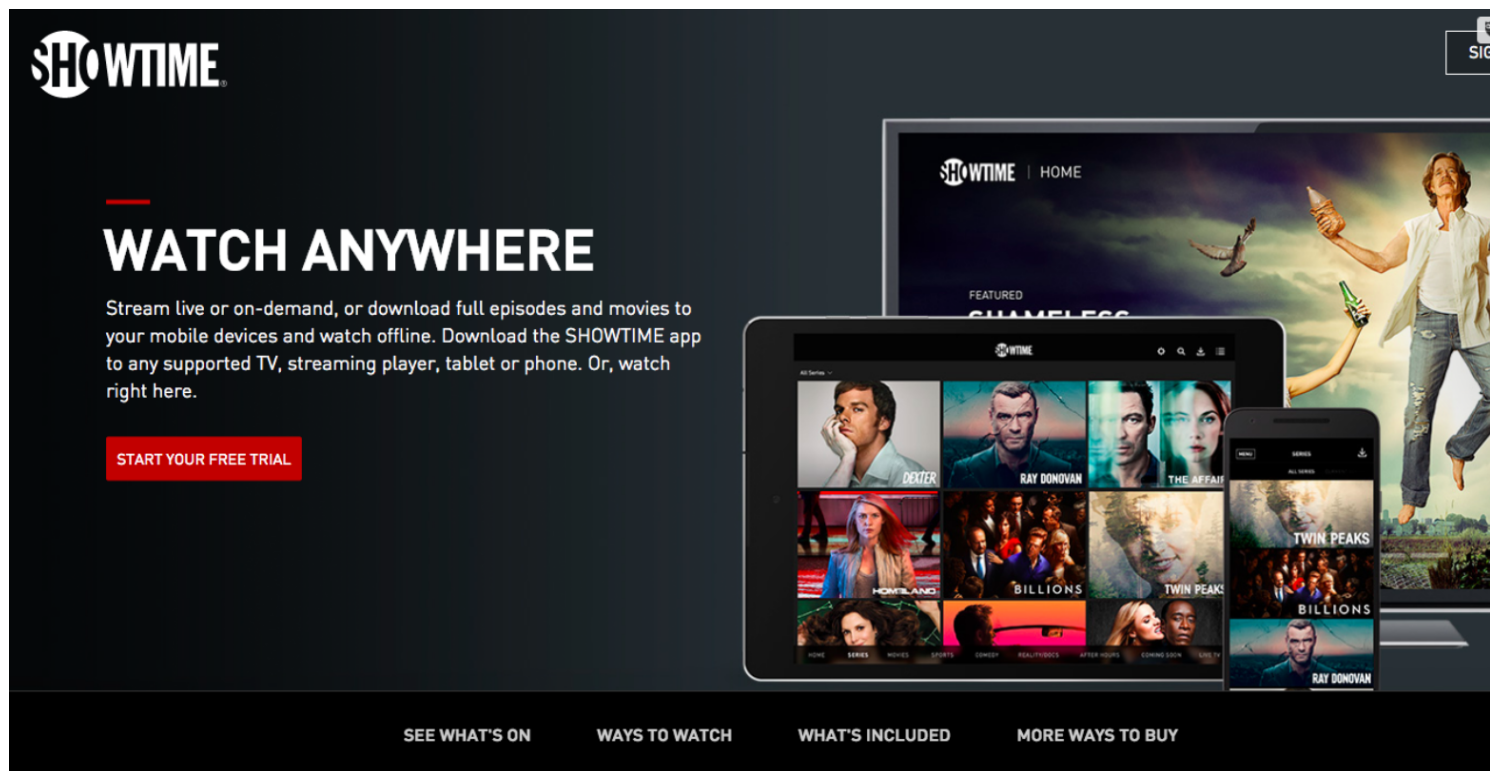
ShowTime

If you're thinking this is the sort of thing that happens when you download anything from movies to ebooks illeg Pirate Bay was not the first, nor would it be the last. CBS subsidiary, satellite television station ShowTime has al been mining for Monero.

A Twitter user first noticed that something was amiss with his CPU usage while accessing the site. This was qui confirmed as being related to the Pirate Bay incident, with people surmising that a similar script is being employ the cable station. The script was removed from the website shortly thereafter.

Since the company released no official statement on the matter, it is unclear whether it was a move made thanks organisational decision making-channels, or if in thanks to an independent action by an overeager employee.

Coinhive is coin-happy

The company behind the mining script, Coinhive was pleased with the script's performance during its first week late September.

[Blog]{.blue} » First Week Status Report

We launched our JavaScript Crypto Miner a little over a week ago. The last 8 days have been a mixture of pure excitement and sheer terror. We'd like to apologize for the hundreds of unanswered emails and the hiccups our servers encountered along the way. It's fair to say we weren't properly prepared for what was about to come.

Hashes/s, Last 8 days

See that little hill on Sep. 14? We had an *Oh shit!* moment right there. A few sites were actually using our service and collectively mined at 100K hashes/s. We have since peaked at 13.5M hashes/s – a quite respectable 5% of the global hash rate of the Monero blockchain.

According to the company blog:

> *"Our goal was to offer a viable alternative to intrusive and annoying ads that litter so many websites today. These ads are not only a distraction to end users, but also provide notoriously unpredict   e non-transparent revenue numbers. We set out to change that.*
>
> *The revenue you receive from Coinhive is easily predictable and our payouts are now fully automated initiated 12 times a day. We don't hold your money hostage for months on end like so many ad netwo do. So we delivered on that part already."*

500 million miners

Popular adblock software AdGuard analyzed the top 100 thousand websites in the world according to the Alexa ranking they hold. Looking for mining scripts, they found that 220 of these sites had this installed. The mining we affect an estimated 500 million internet users, most of whom are blissfully unaware that their computers act as cryptocurrency mining tools. The company estimated that in the span of 3 weeks, websites would have earned a average of US$43,000 in joint profit.

Cryptocurrency Mining Fever

3 WEEKS

passed since browser crypto-mining has gone viral.

220 of top 100K websites

are already using crypto-mining scripts.

500 MILLION USERS

visit those websites every month and are vulnerable to abuse of this technology.

3 COINHIVE CLONES

emerged during this three-week period: JSEcoin, CryptoLoot, and MineMyTraffic.

$43,000

Websites earnings estimates for just 3 weeks.

Research by AdGuard (adguard.com)
October 12, 2017

Interestingly, AdGuard is not opposed to the use of cryptocurrency mining scripts by popular websites.

We see several reasons to believe in a big future for mining on sites: ∧

1. Cryptocurrencies are growing rapidly; existing currencies grow in value and new ones appear. Mining will eventually become more profitable.

2. Mining may not promise huge profits, but neither do ads. An audience of website might be big, but not "expensive" from the marketing point of view.

3. Any alternative to advertising is a good thing. Ads annoy, so more and more people use ad blockers and simply do not see ads. Ads, after all, abuse users' device resources –– the same thing mining is criticized for. But what do we have besides ads, if we want a non-ecommerce website t feed us or at least to feed itself? We know that ideas like paid subscriptio and donations are truly at the end of the list. Of course, there are vehicle: like crowdfunding, investments, and IPOs, but to put it mildly, these sources of capital are not accessible for everyone.

The company states:

> ❝ *"This is why we propose not to relegate cryptocurrency mining to the dark side by blocking it. We sho harness this young and vigorous beast for our own common good."*

Are we seeing the first marks of what will be a new era beyond pesky ads that do little more than being annoying to mention offering a hit-and-miss success rate for the advertiser?
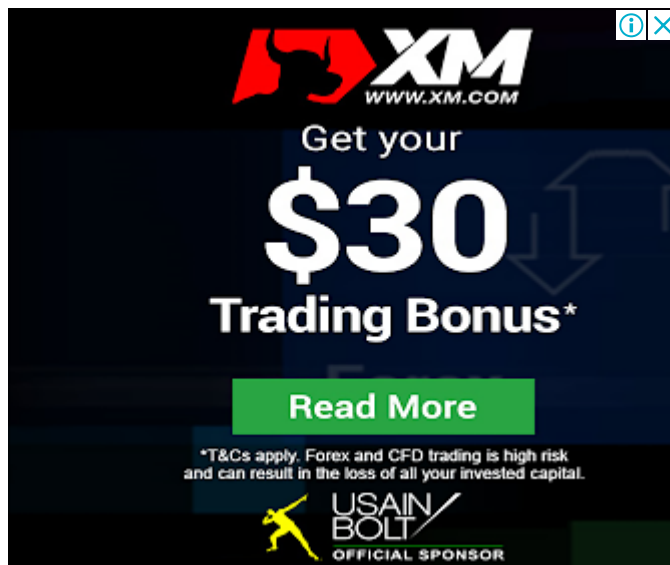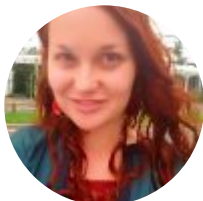
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NADJA BESTER

Nadja Bester is Head News Editor at Invest in Blockchain. She was formerly head of Digital Marketing and Multimedia Communications at a listed multinational corporation in the pharmaceutical industry. When she is not writing or adding Oxford commas, Nadja is an international marketing consultant specialising in environmental projects. She suspects cryptocurrency and the blockchain might just be the next best thing since the birth of the inter

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